

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/1/04 Brad Brandt

Mark 3:7-19 "The Master Plan of the Master" **

Main Idea: The master plan of the Master involves two objectives, as demonstrated by Jesus' actions in Mark 3:7-19.

I. Objective #1: Care for the multitudes (7-12).

A. Some people wanted to kill Him (6).

B. The majority wanted to be near Him (7-10).

1. Jesus healed to show His credentials.

2. Jesus healed to give a sample of His coming kingdom.

3. Jesus healed to gain attention for His Word.

C. The evil spirits knew the truth about Him (11-12).

1. Jesus deserves absolute submission.

2. Jesus doesn't need the devil's help.

II. Objective #2: Concentrate on making disciples (13-19).

A. Jesus revealed His sovereignty (13).

1. He does the choosing.

2. He does the calling.

B. Jesus revealed His strategy (14-15).

Step #1—Selection: He appointed the twelve.

↳ Jesus has many disciples.

↳ Jesus appointed twelve apostles.

Step #2—Association: He allowed them to be *with Him*.

Step #3—Reproduction: He equipped them to do what He did.

C. Jesus revealed His sufficiency (16-19).

1. He picks unqualified people.

2. He does what's necessary to qualify them.

Response: Let's make it personal...

1. Are you in need of the Master's care?

2. Have you responded to the Master's call?

I read a story about a lawyer and a doctor who for years regularly played golf together. They were evenly matched, and there was a keen sense of rivalry. Then one spring the lawyer's game suddenly improved so much that the doctor was losing regularly. The doctor's efforts to improve his own game were unsuccessful, but finally he came up with an idea. At a bookstore he picked out three how-to-play golf texts, and sent them to the lawyer for a birthday present. It wasn't long before they were evenly matched again.

In recent years there have been tons of books written to give strategies for Christian living and church life. Some are helpful, but quite frankly I'm weary of slick-coated "how to" books which sound good when you read them and die when placed on the shelf.

We're going to talk about master planning today. But instead of considering human opinion, we're going to investigate the master plan of the Master Himself. We're going to look at Jesus, specifically at the methodology Jesus utilized in His ministry. It's quite uncomplicated, refreshingly so. As demonstrated by Jesus' actions in Mark 3:7-19, the master plan of the Master involved two objectives. I'll give them to you at the outset, and then we'll examine them in the text. Here was Jesus' strategy:

Objective #1: Care for the multitudes (7-12).

Objective #2: Concentrate on making disciples (13-19).

We've been working our way through the gospel of Mark and we're about to see a change in focus for Jesus. Note two key statements in our text, the first in Mark 3:7, "Jesus withdrew with His disciples." And the second in verse 13, "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted." Until now Jesus has been with the crowds, preaching, healing, and doing miracles. But now His focus begins to transition from public ministry to private ministry, from the masses to twelve men. As we'll see the crowds kept following Him and when they came Jesus cared for them. But the change is striking. Jesus intentionally left the masses in order to invest His time and energies into a select group of men.

There's the basic pattern of Jesus' ministry, a pattern the Scriptures exhort us to follow. When it comes to ministry here's the first objective.

I. Objective #1: Care for the multitudes (7-12).

Jesus cared for people. He *really* cared. That's why in the first place He left His Father's side in heaven to come to earth. He cares for the multitudes.

Of course, not everyone reciprocates His care. In fact, the very context of our story makes that clear.

A. Some people wanted to kill Him (6). In last week's study we saw the Pharisees choose their religious system over the Savior. They watched Jesus heal a man with a shriveled hand, but they didn't celebrate. Instead, as verse 6 indicates, "Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."

And of course, this decision by the Pharisees to explore ways to kill Jesus set in motion the plot that would inevitably result in the cross. It also led to a change in ministry focus for Jesus.

Verse 7—"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake." Why did He withdraw? Probably because He knew the religious authorities were after Him. No, He wasn't afraid, but He knew the time had not yet come for the final confrontation. It was time to shift His attention from the multitudes to the disciples, as we'll see in a moment.

So some, namely the Pharisees and Herodians, wanted to kill Him. But not all did.

B. The majority wanted to be near Him (7-10). "Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed." This isn't the first crowd we've seen in Mark [see 2:4, 13]. Jesus' popularity was growing rapidly. And not just in Galilee, either.

Verse 8—"When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem [Keep in mind it's a hundred mile journey from Jerusalem to where Jesus is], Idumea [Idumea is the ancient country of Edom to the southeast], and the regions across the Jordan [from the east] and around Tyre and Sidon [these were Phoenecian cities on the Mediterranean coast, northwest of Galilee]." So now people are coming to Jesus from the south, the east, and the northwest, from regions where Jews *and* non-Jews lived. Now how the Lord's popularity has moved beyond the "religious" crowd to the common folk.

Verse 9—"Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him." The boat served two purposes. For starters, He could use the boat as a floating platform from which to teach the multitude (as He did in 4:1). In addition, the boat offered safety in case crowd control got out of hand. And apparently, it nearly did...

Verse 10—"For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward [the KJV says, "they pressed upon Him"] to touch him." Now the sick people aren't even waiting for Jesus to touch them. They're

rushing to touch Him.

So the majority wanted to be near Jesus. That's good, right? Unfortunately, then as now crowds can gather for lots of reasons, not all noble. Sadly, most of this multitude saw Jesus as a miracle-worker and nothing more. They wanted to get something out of Him but had no intention of following Him. Yet graciously, Jesus still healed many.

Which raises the question, *why did Jesus heal people?* What was the purpose of Jesus' miracle-working, particularly His miracles of healing? In short, the Lord healed for three basic reasons.

1. *Jesus healed to show His credentials.* His love. His power. His wisdom. He put these attributes and more on display when He healed the sick. In so doing, He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies that pointed to the Messiah.

Do you remember what Jesus did when John the Baptist, while in prison, began to waver? John sent messengers to Jesus asking, "Are you the one, the Messiah, or should we expect someone else?" Matthew 11:4-6 tells what happened. Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." If you're wondering if I'm the Messiah, Jesus says, look at the miracles I've done. Jesus healed to show His credentials.

2. *Jesus healed to give a sample of His coming kingdom.* Why is there sickness and disease in the world anyway? It's because the first man and woman sinned and brought God's curse on the created order. *For the wages of sin is death.* But Jesus came to reverse the curse. At His first coming, He removed the penalty of sin—on the cross. When He comes again, He will remove the very presence of sin—and how? By reclaiming the once sin-cursed world and establishing His kingdom. Then there will be no more pain, sorrow, and death.

That's what He will do in the future, when He comes the second time. But at His first coming He gave a foreshadowing of His kingdom power. He restored maimed limbs with a touch. He made the flesh of a leper as smooth as an infant's. He enabled the blind to see. He even put life back into dead corpses. Why? It was a sampling His kingdom to come. Doesn't it make you homesick?

3. *Jesus healed to gain attention for His Word.* "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God," Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. The miracles were a means to an end. Yes, we have physical needs—we need bread when we're hungry and healing when we're sick—but our greatest need is for the Word of God. That's why Jesus healed. That's why the apostles later healed. That's even why God at times heals today. So that people will see and be drawn to their greatest need, to His Word. The Lord knows we need His Word...

We meet a third group and a third reaction to Jesus in verses 11-12.

C. The evil spirits knew the truth about Him (11-12). Verse 11—"Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.'"

It's ironic that although the crowd didn't grasp Jesus' identity, the evil spirits did, "You are the Son of God!" In Mark, the demons are the only ones to refer to Jesus by this title until the centurion does in 15:39.

The Pharisees wanted to kill Him, the crowd wanted to use Him, but the evil spirits bowed before Him. They knew the truth. They'd seen Him before, even before He came to earth. They could see past the veil of flesh that hid His true identity. This was the One who created them, the One they had once worshiped as angelic messengers. It's also the One who later cast them from heaven, following their rebellious association with

Lucifer. "You are the Son of God." They knew. And they were right.

We learn two things about the Lord from this account.

1. *Jesus deserves absolute submission.* They "fell down before Him." During Jesus' thirty-three years on earth there was a hidden battle that surfaced from time to time. Jesus was literally invading Satan's turf. Satan is a fallen, doomed creature. The Lord has granted him limited freedom to operate his wicked plan, but his days are numbered—and he knows it. He is nervous, as are his forces. He hates the light and the source of the light, but He's powerless in the presence of the Light.

Don't miss the weight of those words. They *fell down before Him*. Know this. Jesus deserves absolute submission. From the demons. From us.

2. *Jesus doesn't need the devil's help.* Verse 12—" But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was." Mark doesn't tell us the reason for the orders. Maybe it's because Jesus wanted people to learn the truth about Him from listening to His words and seeing His works, not from the testimony of an evil spirit. Maybe it's because the testimony of these spirits would only confuse hearers and create a bizarre scene. After all, though they were now speaking the truth, they typically spoke lies.

Of this we can be sure. When it comes to the Lord's work, the Lord doesn't need the devil's help. There may be a lesson here when it comes to the methodology we choose for ministry today. Just because something "gets a crowd" doesn't mean we should use it to advance the gospel. If the method distracts from the message, we shouldn't use the method.

So when it comes to ministry there's objective #1—care for the multitudes. Jesus did and we should, too. However, in time we must narrow the focus for our mission can't be fulfilled at the crowd level alone. When you watch Jesus in action you soon see a second objective surface, one that was His primary pursuit.

II. Objective #2: Concentrate on making disciples (13-19).

In the following scene the Lord revealed three things pertaining to disciple-making.

A. Jesus revealed His sovereignty (13). "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him."

Note Jesus' first action here. He *went up on a mountain*. He left the crowd. He distanced Himself from the crowd. So there is something more to ministry than gathering crowds, something much more important.

Why did He go to the mountain? Luke 6:12 says He went there to pray, in fact, He spent the night in prayer. Jesus wanted to get alone with His Father. Why? What was on His mind? The most important decision He would make in His earthly ministry. The decision that would determine (from a human perspective) the future success of His mission. What was it?

Notice what He did after praying on the mountain. Verse 13—He "called to him those He wanted." Luke 6:13 states, "When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles." Don't miss the Master's sovereignty here. There are two evidences of it.

1. *He does the choosing.* Who came to Jesus? Mark says, "those *He wanted*." Luke says that He "choose twelve of them." Jesus later had this to say to these men in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."

2. *He does the calling.* The text again, "He *called to him* those He wanted." At the heart of discipleship is His sovereignty. He is the Master and Lord. We don't volunteer for His service. He chooses and calls whom He

wills.

And what's the appropriate response when He chooses and calls? Mark says, "And they came to Him." When the Savior calls the sheep hear His voice and follow Him. True sheep love the voice of the Shepherd. They do what He says knowing it's an undeserved privilege to come to Him.

Do you see it that way? Is it a privilege or a grind to listen to and follow the Shepherd? Jesus made it clear that discipleship rests, first of all, on His sovereignty.

B. Jesus revealed His strategy (14-15). When it came to training the disciples He chose Jesus used a very specific strategy. And it worked. Unlike some of our efforts...

A professional animal trainer by the name of Lori tells the following story: "I was disturbed when my own dog developed a bad habit. Every time I hung my wash out on the clothesline, she would yank it down. Drastic action was called for. I put a white kitchen towel on the line and waited. Each time she pulled it off, I scolded her. After two weeks the towel was untouched. Then I hung out a large wash and left to do some errands. When I came home, my clean clothes were scattered all over the yard. On the line was the white kitchen towel."

Here was Jesus' strategy, verses 14-15—"He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." The Lord's strategy involved three steps.

Step #1—Selection: He appointed the twelve. The term "disciple" simply means a "follower." A disciple is someone who learns by observing and following. We might use the term "apprentice." The term "apostle" means "one sent" and refers to a person who is sent on an official task with a commission.

We see both in the text here. Jesus had many disciples but out of that number He selected twelve apostles to be His special ambassadors. Allow me to restate:

▷ Jesus has many disciples.

▷ Jesus appointed twelve apostles. If you are a Christian, you are a disciple. But you're not an apostle. In our text Jesus selected twelve men to be apostles.

How many? *Twelve*, and the number "12" is hardly coincidental. In Genesis God blessed Jacob with twelve sons, then in Exodus built those twelve sons into a nation consisting of twelve tribes. God chose Israel for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world so that all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). When Messiah Jesus came He selected twelve men, as Wessel observes, "the new Israel in embryo."

Ponder this. The church holds a special place in God's eye in the fulfillment of His redemptive plan. In 1 Peter 2:9 we read about the church's identity, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a *holy nation*, a people belonging to God..." The church is a "spiritual" nation of which the twelve apostles were the nucleus.

I hope you cherish the church. And its foundation.

Move to the final book of the Bible and guess who is mentioned in the description of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city? Revelation 21:14—"The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the *names of the twelve apostles* of the Lamb."

J. D. Jones suggests that "the whole fabric of the Christian Church bears forever upon it the stamp and

impress of these men who laid its first foundations." The Lord Himself understood how critical this choice of the Twelve was. Remember, He prepared for it by spending the preceding night in prayer.

There's step #1—selection. Jesus appointed the Twelve.

*Step #2—Association: He allowed them to be **with Him**.* That little word "with" speaks loads. It indicates close contact, continual opportunity for observation and interaction. It points to the kind of association that produces resemblance. Jesus made an intentional decision to invest Himself into these twelve men. They would be together constantly until He returned to heaven. They would eat together, travel together, have late night talks together. They would *be together*.

Let this sink in. If we're going to disciple someone—and as we'll see disciple-making is our assignment—it takes more than meeting together once a week for a Bible study. It's life-on-life.

And by the way, no *one* person besides Jesus can disciple another by Himself. Today, disciple-making is the task of Jesus' Body, the entire Church, for the gifts necessary for discipling are distributed to the whole Body.

Here's the strategy: first, selection; second, *association*.

Step #3—Reproduction: He equipped them to do what He did. Mark says (14), "That he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." What's significant about preaching and casting out demons? It's what Jesus had been doing. Jesus' plan was that after He returned to heaven His work would go on for He would work *through* these men, these twelve men, these apostles.

And that's what happened. In A.D. 30 Jesus went back to heaven. Shortly thereafter, the Holy Spirit came and birthed the church into existence, built upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph 3:20)."

But the reproduction didn't end with the apostles. In the church, it continued. In the church it *continues* to this very day.

E.g.—

To really appreciate Jesus' disciple-making strategy we need to take a close look at the twelve men Jesus called that day. The list of their names that follows reveals a third truth about Jesus.

C. Jesus revealed His sufficiency (16-19). "These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him."

When you look carefully at this list you can't help but note two things.

1. *He picks unqualified people.* These men weren't wealthy. They had no special education. They lacked positions of power and influence in the community. They were indeed twelve ordinary men.

When Irving S. Olds was chairman of the U.S. Steel Corporation, he arrived for a stockholders' meeting and was confronted by a woman who asked, "Exactly who are you and what do you do?" Without batting an eye, Olds replied, "I am your chairman. Of course, you know the duties of a chairman--that's someone who is roughly the equivalent of parsley on a platter of fish."

That's what we have here. If you were forming a team to change the world, you probably wouldn't select these twelve men. Four of them were fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, & John), one a member of a radical

and violent political party (Simon the Zealot—Josephus called this party "the daggersmen"), one a hated tax collector (Matthew). Of six of them we know almost nothing. There wasn't a preacher or expert in the Scriptures in the whole bunch—all were laymen.

That's not to say He doesn't use our personalities and backgrounds, for He does. J. D. Jones comments on the role of the apostle, "He was not primarily to be a theologian; his business was to be a witness, a witness to facts about Jesus, and especially to the great fact of the Resurrection. And when it comes to witnessing, the testimony of the plain, homely, unimaginative man is the most impressive of all. Now the apostles were men of that type. They were not subtle men, they were not imaginative or romantic men; they were not at all likely to confuse subjective experience and objective fact; they were men of a prosaic and literal type of mind, and therefore admirably fitted to be trustworthy and convincing witnesses."

But the bottom line remains. Jesus *picks unqualified people*. It's not just then, either. He still does. It's true of us. We weren't a "good catch" for Him. We didn't have what it takes to do kingdom work. But that's the way He works. He picks unqualified men. But praise His name, in addition...

2. *He does what's necessary to qualify them.* He changes names—Simon to Peter. He changes associations. He changes hearts. He makes the changes possible.

How does He do it, this qualifying work? Through teaching. It's significant that in the harmony of the four gospels Matthew 5-7 fits into between Mark 3:19 and Mark 3:20. What's Matthew 5-7? It begins (Matt 5:1-3) —"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...'"

What is that? It's the Sermon on the Mount, the sermon Jesus delivered on the mountain to the disciples He chose. It's Jesus delivering "Kingdom Living 101."

That's how He turns unqualified possibilities into qualified disciples, through His Word. Let this sink in. The very next thing Jesus did with these men is *teach them*. That's the plan.

This evening we'll begin a new series on The Twelve Disciples. Tonight we'll explore, by way of overview, that the Lord specializes in using ordinary people for extraordinary purposes. That includes you.

Response: Let's make it personal...with two questions.

1. *Are you in need of the Master's care?* That's objective #1—care for the multitudes. Jesus cares for you today. Are you hurting, in need? Look to Him. Bring your needs to Him. He cares for you.

2. *Have you responded to the Master's call?* His second objective is to concentrate on making disciples. Is He calling you to give allegiance to Him? Have you submitted? Are you willing to do so today? He is worthy.